

I strongly support proposed S.B. 43, S.B. 90 and H.B. 5254 which would restore recreational liability protection to municipalities and agencies such as metropolitan districts. As member of the Ashford Conservation Commission I know that our town values greatly its open spaces. At a recent meeting on the protection of a town parcel the Ashford citizens turned out in enthusiastic support. A single lawsuit would change that support. Our towns cannot afford to be vulnerable to lawsuits that have no merit.

The 800 miles of the CT blue trail system managed by CT Forest and Park Assoc. run on both public and private land. The Nipmuck Blue trail runs 37 miles through Mansfield town open space, land trust land, state forest, federal land, Yale Forest and private land to the Mass boarder. All landowners except the town of Mansfield are protected from liability by state statute.

The state of CT has a goal to protect open space for the future. Our towns are asked to contribute to the acquisitions to fulfill the goals of the state but are denied the same protection as private landowners and land trusts and the state itself.

I grew up in Farmington hiking the Metacombt trail through the MDC lands in West Hartford. MDC has always been concerned about safety. The closed yellow gate that the bicycler accidentally ran into maintained the safety of a pedestrian/bike path from vehicle access. If she had hit a baby stroller instead of the gate the consequences would have been different- the reason the same – an unfortunate failure to look where she was going.

2/14/2011

The world runs on trust and a desire to do the right thing. I think that we need to confirm that within reason we all have a responsibility to take care of ourselves and others, and be accountable for our actions. Support for the proposed S.B. 43, S.B. 90 and H.B. 5254 strongly confirms that towns and utilities as owners of their land are protected from those who think that the world is there to take advantage of. We all need to have the opportunity to be outdoors. Our town open space lands allow us the sense of wellbeing, and to our satisfy our inherit need to wander in the natural world.

Sincerely,

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